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ABSTRACT

The similar structure of present-day North American cities makes it impossible to study urban poverty as anything other than a concomitant of the possession of certain demographic characteristics the penalty for which is imposed on a society-wide level. By shifting our focus, however, to incorporate both Latin American cities and North American cities in previous stages of their history it should be possible to increase our understanding of the distribution and nature of poverty as it depends on urban structure. The research reported here is based on 1953 and 1963 data on Puerto Rican households collected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Certain tentative conclusions were reached: (1) As compared with the U.S., Puerto Rican poverty is less closely linked to stigmatized demographic status. This may be due to the absence of blacks. (2) As is the case in the U.S., Puerto Rican urban residence serves to somewhat ameliorate poverty. This seems to be due both to higher wages and to public assistance. (3) Family size and sex of head are the principal determinants of income among the poor. Sources of income vary slightly by area in the magnitude of their contribution. (4) The urban poor spend relatively more on housing and less on clothing than rural residents. There was no evidence for an urban "mass consumption" effect. (Author/JM)

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W3-31 THE DEMOGRAPHY OF URBAN POVERTY: NORTH AND LATIN AMERICA*

by

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A working paper of the Center for the Study of the City and its Environment, Institution for Social and Policy Studies, Yale University

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"For a while I thought that some insight into the future course of income distribution (in North America) might be garnered by speculating on foreseeable differences in urban industrial structure. But, industrial earnings differentials excluding agriculture are not likely to grow large enough ever to explain more than a small part of variations in income...New York City poverty..(is)... totally unrelated to any special aspects of city life. Rather, the New York City distribution is the outcome of the proportion of family heads non-white, poorly educated, aged, and female."

Smolensky (1961)

The similar structure of present-day North American cities makes it impossible to study urban poverty as anything other than a concomitant of the possession of certain demographic characteristics the penalty for which is imposed on a society-wide level. By shifting our focus, however, to incorporate both Latin American cities and North American cities in previous stages of their history it should be possible to increase our understanding of the distribution and nature of poverty as it depends on urban structure. The purpose here is to set out some facts and conjectures with which to begin such a study. Ultimately the aim is to provide a statistical enlargement of the picture provided by such impressionistic accounts as those of Liebow (1967), Lewis (1965), Leeds (1967,1969), Lloyd (1969) and Peattie (1968).

WHAT IS POVERTY?

Most simply, poverty is the lack of sufficient money. But the issue is far from simple. Sufficient for whom? Sufficient for what?

Our unit of analysis will be the individual family since it is here that most decisions of demographic consequence are taken. In their 1964 report

which marked the beginning of the War on Poverty the Council of Economic Advisers (U.S.A.) defined poverty as being a family income of $3000/year or less. Subsequently the Social Security Administration developed a sliding scale which takes into account family size, composition, residence, and proportions of income required to purchase a minimum adequate diet.[2] Clearly these conditions have varied at different times and places and their proper adjustment is no small problem. Later in this paper we will employ just such a simple "poverty line" definition for its aid in calculation.[3] This definition is typically based on the requirements of subsistence and has the virtue of an apparent concreteness. Yet fundamentally we agree with Miller and Roby (1971) that with economic development subsistence issues are replaced by issues of inequality - full participation for the bottom segment of society and an adequate life chance for their children. As described by Miller and Roby inequality is a question of

> "....(i) incomes, (ii) assets, and (iii) basic services, but also of (iv) self-respect and (v) opportunities for education and social mobility and (vi) participation in many forms of decision-making." (p.1)

This paper is organized around the essentially economic aspects of poverty: income and expenditures. Yet along the way we hope to shed some light on more general life-cycle aspects of urban family poverty.

URBAN STRUCTURE

By urban structure I mean the whole range of city attributes which help to explain the nature of poverty. These include occupational and industrial

composition, relative wages and prices and the demographic structure of the labor force, as well as available housing, consumer durables, public services, etc.

It is impossible to attempt to begin with a multivariate theory incorporating even some of the relationships between these variables and to test empirically the distributive effects of poverty. Rather we will proceed by highlighting certain aspects of the problem.

Certainly occupational structure is a key factor in the distribution of income. In this regard the statement by Sweezey (1) with which we began assumes not only that the occupational distribution of wages is the same in different cities, but also that selected demographic characteristics (being female, for example) either over rides the effect of occupations or leaves the effect of occupations on income unchanged. For example, it does not follow that because women are paid a higher wage for the same work in an occupation as men, that the same occupational distribution of labor in cities with equal numbers of men and women are restricted to certain occupations in proportions of their scarcity in others[2]. There is, of course, much evidence to support these generalizations, yet questions still remain.

(2) Which demographic statuses have been penalized in a particular process at different times and what is the effect of changes in these proportions? Thus it seems reasonable that low education is an important determinant of poverty only after extensive economic development. (3) In addition (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) Besides, it is increased efficiency (economies) with concentration and the division of labor which is the principal cause of

growth, then we must look for the intersection of such a regime with superior demographic outcomes in order to start the talons of poverty.[8]

(2) How do the occupational structure and the political basis of support alter the very nature of poverty? Thus Peyton Hughes (Yale and Tennessee, 1970: 51-57) tried to isolate in 1960 the most extensive occupation was that of domestic servant, constituting 34 per cent of the labor force. Surely such a situation relies to vital segment on a position of dependence in the life of the poor. What effect does this have on the distribution of poverty? What is the effect of the existence of welfare and other forms of government subsidy?

(3) How have an increasingly low concentration of unemployable migrant workers affect the distribution of poverty? In comparison with North American, Latin American cities exhibit a high percentage of female migrant, ill-suited and of young workers. Do these people simply occupy the positions at the bottom of society vacancies that their native born sisters and older workers in the labour market? Or is a different occupational structure built around their presence? Is there a sort of succession as does (1) the old-nineteenth century Irish immigrants replaced the Polish labor force which had originally been poor, but the fact to work in the lowest position.

(4) How is poverty in the city affected by the surrounding agrarian labor market? Thornthwaite (1966, 1972) shows that in underdeveloped economy the highest

there was a great deal of geographic as mobility as the part of hypothesis advancement(s) concerns. Those who argued in the city were necessarily successful in acquiring more property. Much of the movement migration in Latin America today apparently occurs as steps towards urban places themselves. Also, can this process be utilized in the new Transamerican Amerindian areas once Latin American countries are developed to a single large city? Second, we expect a greater percentage of the skilled workers to be "trapped" in Latin American cities. How do they survive? How does Harris propose to break the network of poverty (politics, economy, and the life cycle).

If nuances these questions can be highlighted by considering also the influential role relations with agriculture, seasonal employment and back migration(s) (see the 'going backward') in the structures of dwellers. Further, let us go on to examine some views regarded of urban poverty.

The family as economic unit

Survey data on the nature and source of family income and expenditure, will enable us to provide tentative answers to a host of questions proposed by Oscar Lewis enactment of urban poverty. Typical of these is Lewis' (1967:xlv) discussion of the complexity surrounding the provision of modern consumption goods by poor families in the Culture of the.

> "... most Puerto Rican slum people like you and me in many ways. Yet, you know those poor people, how rich it is in the search for satisfactions. They manage to survive it in many basic things." Materials of the lower economic and ethnic, the dominant, their participation and used to keep the slums in order even while and work around the Culture. These are all the participation,

TABLE TWO

PUERTO RICAN POVERTY INCIDENCE, 1963

(% families in poverty, by area and demographic characteristics)

	PUERTO RICO	URBAN	SAN JUAN
Number of families	461,000	224,000	139,000
Total %	16.7	10.2	4.9
Family Head			
< 25 years of age	22.4	5.2	0.0
≥ 65 years of age	31.6	25.0	13.4
female	40.8	32.9	19.6
education = none	37.8	39.6	25.6
education = 1-3 years	22.9	17.5	9.2
no one in family worked	51.5	37.3	11.7
no one in family worked regularly	39.5	31.7	18.9
head works in -- industry:			
agriculture	26.0	9.8	-
construction	6.9	4.0	2.3
manufacturing	5.2	3.1	0.0
trade	8.1	5.7	5.7
finance	0.0	0.0	0.0
transportation	3.1	3.2	0.0
services	15.6	14.5	8.0
public administration	4.7	3.2	0.7
unemployed or not in labor force	36.1	27.4	14.8

TABLE TWO (continued)

PUERTO RICAN POVERTY INCIDENCE, 1963

(% families in poverty, by area and demographic characteristics)

occupation of head:			
farmers & farm managers	21.4	-	-
proprietors, managers & officials, nonfarm	4.0	2.2	1.7
clerical, sales	5.5	4.5	3.2
craftsmen, foremen	5.4	4.3	1.9
operatives	5.5	4.3	-
service, except household	13.9	16.0	5.5
farm laborers and foremen	29.6	-	-
laborers except farm	11.4	4.0	3.6
Class of head			
private and government	9.2	3.2	2.2
private	10.6	3.2	2.9
government	4.6	3.0	0.5
self employed	17.6	15.5	6.4

loss of family population in non San Juan urban areas). These categories should permit an appreciation of the effect of urbanization on poverty.

As we see in table two, Puerto Rico resembles the U.S.A. in having a higher incidence of poverty in rural areas, and it also agrees with Ornati's (1968:55) U.S.A. finding that the percentage in poverty decreases as city size increases. A further generalization from this table is that "demographic stigmatization" is somewhat alleviated by a more completely urban location. Of interest here is that residence must actually be in San Juan for the effect to be felt by those with no education at all.

Examining the industrial and occupational breakdowns of table two we see not only a tendency for higher wages in urban settings (particularly for service workers and non farm laborers) but also the significant rural-urban-metropolitan differences produced by public assistance (observe the incidence of poverty for non-working families). This latter point is corroborated by the high percentage of poor family income provided by such assistance in San Juan (table three). It seems to be the case that not only is public assistance a benefit of urban residence, but also that the private and public sectors pay higher wages in cities ("class of head" in table two). Moreover, the self employed also do appreciably better when in San Juan. The higher wage levels appear to carry everyone along. (Of course these gains may be wiped out by associated prices, yet the small distances involved make this somewhat unlikely for commodities other than housing. Even here

there are no large differences: average monthly rents paid by the poor in the whole country, urban areas, and San Juan were, respectively, $5.30, $8.13, $10.70). It is time we examined family income more closely.

Income

In an attempt to assess the relative effects of head of household demographic characteristics on the income (including in kind) of poor families we estimated the following equation for a national sample of 242 poor (income < $1000) Puerto Rican families. (Standard errors are in parentheses).

$$\text{Income} = 790.6 - 9.9\,(\text{AGE OF HEAD}) + .03\,(\text{AGE OF HEAD})^2$$
$$\qquad\qquad (7.8) \qquad\qquad (.03)$$
$$-2.3(\text{EDUCATION OF HEAD}) + 84.5\,(\text{SEX OF HEAD}) + 21.2\,(\text{NO. OF PERSONS})$$
$$(1.1) \qquad\qquad (27.6) \qquad\qquad (7.9)$$

$R^2 = .154$, SEE = 206.1

We observe that age of head is not significant, while family size and sex of the head have the greatest influence on income. Among the poor, with their generally low level of education and either unemployment or unskilled jobs, the marginal return to an extra year of education is quite low. Indeed, having more children seems to be the most effective way of increasing income (ignoring added costs, that is).

TABLE THREE

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SOURCES OF THE FAMILY
MONEY INCOME OF THE POOR (Income < $1000),
1963, BY AREA

	PUERTO RICO	URBAN	SAN JUAN
Wages and salaries	48.7	29.8	34.0
Self-employment			
profession & trades	5.9	7.1	5.5
unincorporated business or farm	6.2	6.0	4.4
Rental	1.1	0.5	0.4
Boarders	0.3	2.4	0.9
Sale of food	1.9	0.6	1.6
Military service	1.4	2.7	-
Cash from family outside home	10.4	23.8	8.1
Unemployment insurance	1.8	0.7	1.3
Soc.sec., old age benefits etc.	12.7	11.2	13.4
Other government pension	0.6	1.8	5.4
Public assistance & private charity	11.2	13.8	17.9
Alimony	3.4	5.7	3.4
Miscellaneous	4.2	4.9	3.8
	100.0	100.0	100.0

What are the actual sources of funds, and how do they vary by area? As shown in table three, city dwellers depend less on wages and more on government assistance with those residing in San Juan most dependent on charity, government pensions, social security, and old age benefits. By comparison the extent to which urban non-San Juan residents depend on self employment and cash from those outside the home is striking. Of course the latter may constitute "transfer payments" from the urban economy: wages earned by family members now living in San Juan. As for income received in kind (which doesn't amount to more than a few hundred dollars) it is distributed by commodity as might be expected: rural dwellers receive a higher proportion in food, urban dwellers in clothing. The similar percentage received from housing is a bit of a surprise).

Expenditures

In this society most people are in debt, whether their income be below the poverty line or not. As shown below, indebtedness increases with urban residence.

NET CHANGES IN ASSETS AND LIABILITIES (DOLLARS), 1963

RURAL PUTO		URBAN		SAN JUAN	
Total	Poor	Total	Poor	Total	Poor
-209.	-89	-139.	-161.	-197.	-160

TABLE XXII

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE AVERAGE FAMILY EXPENDITURES
TOTAL POPULATION AND THE POOR, BY AREA, 1950

	Puerto Rico	Puerto Rico	Urban	Non-Farm
Food	46.8	46.8	47.0	46.8
Clothing	11.2	11.2	10.8	7.8
Housing	13.8	13.8	18.4	19.0
Household furnishings	4.8	4.8	4.8	5.1
Transportation	4.3	4.3	5.0	4.8
Alcohol and tobacco	3.2	3.2	3.0	4.7
Medical care	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Personal care	4.6	4.6	4.8	4.5
Recreation, reading, education	2.3	2.3	2.7	2.8
Other consumption	3.2	3.2	3.0	3.4
Personal insurance	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.0
Gifts and donations	3.4	3.4	3.0	3.7
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The economic problems this subdivision are identical for the poor in Puerto Rico. Poor is a constant percentage of the budget across areas, but city residents spend a greater percentage on housing and less on clothing and miscellaneous. There is no evidence to support the assertion that the poor living in San Juan are "better off" absent subsistence costs and social disorganization as clothing and housefurnishings. There is, however, some evidence of increased use of alcohol and tobacco. As a way of regression continues, family income is the best predictor of amounts expended per capita as the major items of basic food. Good income is known most demographic characteristics when income effects that only adjustment was to age of head - a life cycle standard.

CONCLUSION

Viewing this study in our definitions, yet we are able to reach certain tentative conclusions.

(1) As compared with the United States, Puerto Rican poverty is less closely linked to migration, demographic status. This may be due to the absence of blacks.

(2) As in the case in the United States, Puerto Rican private residence serves to somewhat ameliorate poverty. This seems to be due both to higher wages and to public assistance.

XII. Nancy Allen and Sec. of Lead are the principal determinants of income group for prof. Instead of taxes less slightly to see in the approach of more contributions, and public assistance today amended studies are that appear to group areas for sake of family consequences decision to learn his group areas of/can sustain our determinants as accessible a explicit/in portion of total money.

XIII. To group just spent importantly here in keeping and sake as economy dose more sections. There are an evidence for an group "trade associated" Mark.

[illegible]

1. Annual tourism income is calculated by multiplying the [illegible] figures by the daily spend. This projected income will be [illegible] years of [illegible] in view of the [illegible] capacity of [illegible] which is the only [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

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